

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:

1. A method of providing shipping services via an electronic procurement system comprising the steps of:

offering shipping services to a user via a buyer interface of an electronic procurement system;

enabling the user to purchase shipping services via the electronic procurement system;  
and

returning a printable shipping label to the buyer interface.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the shipping services are outbound shipping services.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the shipping services are for shipping a package from a location of the user to a second location.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the shipping services are for shipping a package from the user's location to a second location.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one commodity is offered for sale via the electronic procurement system in addition to the shipping services.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic procurement system enables an employer of the user to create a list of suppliers from whom the user can make purchases.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the shipping services are offered at a price negotiated between an employer of the user and a shipping carrier.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the price is stored in the electronic procurement system.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic procurement system records purchases made by the user.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic procurement system records purchases made by an organization within a company of which the user is a member.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the electronic procurement system is operable to generate reports based on purchases made by the user using the electronic procurement system.
12. The method of claim 11 wherein the reports show purchase data at the organization level.
13. The method of claim 12 wherein the reports show purchase data at the user level.

14. A method of providing shipping services in an electronic procurement system comprising the steps of:

providing a selectable list of suppliers to a user via a buyer interface of an electronic procurement system, at least one of the suppliers being a shipping carrier; and

offering shipping services to the user via the electronic procurement system upon the user selecting the shipping carrier from the list of suppliers.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of:

enabling the user to purchase shipping services via the electronic procurement system.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising the steps of:

generating data formatted to program an radio frequency identification (RFID) tag;

returning data formatted to program an radio frequency identification (RFID) tag to the buyer interface.

17. The method of claim 15 further comprising the steps of:

generating a shipping label; and

returning a shipping label to the buyer interface.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of generating a shipping label comprises providing the ship to address, and the level of service to a shipping carrier tracking application.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the electronic procurement system comprises a buyer procurement server and a shipping carrier procurement services server.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the electronic procurement system further comprises a commerce services server.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein the step of offering shipping services to the user via the electronic procurement system upon the user selecting the shipping carrier from the list of suppliers comprises the steps of:

sending user data from the procurement server to the shipping carrier procurement services server upon the user selecting the shipping carrier from the list of suppliers; and

sending a startup uniform resource locator from the shipping carrier procurement services application to the buyer procurement application.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the electronic procurement system further comprises a commerce services server and wherein the step of sending user data from the buyer procurement server to the shipping carrier procurement services server comprises the steps of:

sending user data from the buyer procurement server to the commerce services server;  
and

sending user data from the commerce services server to the shipping services procurement server.

23. The method of claim 21 wherein the user data comprises:

- a user identifier;
- a buyer company identifier;
- a return uniform resource locator; and
- a session identifier.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising the steps of:

sending transaction data to the buyer procurement server from the shipping carrier procurement services server, the data being sent to location referred to by the return uniform resource locator.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein the user data further comprises:

- a unique buyer key; and
- a supplier company identifier;

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the user data is sent in XML tags.
27. The method of claim 22 wherein the user data comprises:
  - a user identifier;
  - a buyer company identifier;
  - a return uniform resource locator; and
  - a session identifier.
28. The method of claim 27 wherein the user data further comprises:
  - a supplier company identifier.
29. The method of claim 28 wherein the user data further comprises:
  - a unique buyer key,
  - and a unique supplier key,  
the unique buyer key being sent from the procurement server to the commerce services server and the unique supplier key being sent from the commerce services server to the shipping carrier procurement services server.
30. The method of claim 29 wherein the user data is sent in XML tags.
31. The method of claim 21 wherein the startup uniform resource locator contains embedded values.
32. The method of claim 31 wherein the embedded values comprise a user identifier, a buyer company identifier, and a session identifier.
33. The method of claim 21 wherein the step of enabling the user to purchase shipping services via the electronic procurement system comprises:
  - directing a browser application on the buyer interface to the startup uniform resource locator.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the step of enabling the user to purchase shipping services via the electronic procurement system further comprises:

enabling the user to specify package shipping data including a ship to address, a package weight, and a level of service.

6

35. A method of providing shipping services comprising the steps of:

- providing a selectable list of suppliers to a user logged in to an electronic procurement application, at least one of the suppliers being a shipping carrier;
- offering shipping services to the user upon the user selecting the shipping carrier from the list.

36. A method of providing shipping services comprising the steps of:

- receiving a request for shipping services made from a buyer interface of an electronic procurement system; and
- returning a shipping label to the buyer interface.

37. A method of shipping a package comprising

- purchasing shipping services via an electronic procurement system.

38. A system for providing shipping services comprising:

- a buyer interface communicatively connected to a network;
- a buyer procurement server communicatively connected to the network, the buyer procurement server configured to offer shipping services to a user accessing the buyer interface; and
- a shipping carrier procurement services server communicatively connected to the network, the shipping carrier procurement services server being configured to respond to a request for shipping services from the user by sending an electronic shipping label to the buyer interface.

39. The system of claim 38 further comprising:

- a commerce services server communicatively connected to the network, the commerce services server configured to accept a request for shipping services from the buyer procurement server and forward that request to the shipping carrier procurement services server.

40. A system for providing shipping services comprising:

- a shipping carrier procurement services server configured to receive a request for shipping services made from a buyer interface of an electronic procurement system and configured to generate and return an electronic shipping label to the buyer interface.

41. The system of claim 40 further comprising;

- a shipping carrier tracking application configured to accept a request for a shipping label from the shipping carrier procurement services server, generate a shipping label, and send the shipping label to the shipping carrier procurement services server.

42. The system of claim 40 wherein the shipping carrier procurement services server is configured to send a total amount for shipping services to a buyer procurement application.

43. The system of claim 42 further comprising:

a shipping carrier billing application configured to accept a request for a total shipping amount from a shipping carrier procurement services server, calculate a total shipping amount, and send the total shipping amount to the shipping carrier procurement services server.

44. The system of claim 40 wherein the shipping carrier procurement services server is configured to send a startup uniform resource locator to the buyer interface upon the server receiving the request for shipping services.

45. The system of claim 40 wherein the shipping carrier procurement services server is configured to receive package shipping data from the buyer interface.

46. The system of claim 45 wherein the electronic shipping label returned to the buyer interface includes one or more elements of the package shipping data.